

Message Text

SECRET

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 4204

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, MILI, PBOR, IS, LE

SUBJECT SOUTH LEBANON

1. GOL FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTER BOUTROS ASKED ME TO CALL ON HIM AT HIS OFFICE IN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AT 1230 ON AUGUST 26. DCM LANE ALSO ATTENDED AND DURING COURSE OF MEETING, BOUTROS CALLED IN GENERAL KHOURY.

2. AFTER BRIEF DISCUSSION OF OTHER MATTERS (BEING REPORT SEPTELS), BOUTROS SAID THAT MAIN REASON FOR WANTING TO SEE ME WAS TO DISCUSS SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON. HE SAID THAT NEGOTIATIONS WERE CONTINUING ON SITUATION THERE, IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT AN AGREE-
MENT WOULD BE REACHED SOON, SOLUTION NOW BEING DISCUSSED CALLS FOR THE CEASE-FIRE BY ALL PARTIES, FOLLOWED BY PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL. THOSE PALESTINIANS FROM CAMPS NEAR TYRE WILL RETURN THERE, THOSE FROM OTHER CAMPS IN LEBANON WILL RETURN TO THEM, AND THOSE PALESTINIANS AND OTHERS WHO HAD ENTERED

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BEIRUT 04204 261711Z

LEBANON AFTER THE 1969 CAIRO AGREEMENT WILL BE GROUPED NEAR THE SYRIAN BORDER PENDING FINAL SYRIAN AGREEMENT THAT THEY COULD ENTER THAT COUNTRY. ALL NON-PALESTINIANS WILL ALSO LEAVE LEBANON AND SOME MIGHT BE REPATRIATED. ARMS IN EXCESS OF THOSE PERMITTED PALESTINIANS UNDER THE CAIRO AGREEMENT OF 1969 WILL BE ASSEMBLED AT A SPOT TO BE DESIGNATED,

FROM WHICH GOL HOPED THEY COULD BE EXPORTED TO SYRIA.

3. WHILE THIS PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL IS TAKING PLACE, LEBANESE ARMY WILL ENTER THE SOUTH, AND OCCUPY THREE MAIN POSITIONS, MARJAYUN, NABATIYAH, AND TYRE. GOL EXPECTED TO USE A TOTAL OF 1,000 MEN DIVIDED INTO THREE TEAMS. BOUTROS FEELS THAT IF AGREEMENT IS REACHED AND CEASE-FIRE HOLDS, THIS FORCE WILL BE SUFFICIENT TO MAINTAIN ORDER. THE TEAM IN MARJAYUN WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SECURING THE ROAD TO NAQURA VIA BINT JBAYL, THE TEAM IN TYRE WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ROAD EAST TO TAYYABAH, AND NABATIYAH WOULD BE THE HEADQUARTERS.

4. BOURTOS SAID THAT HE EXPECTED LEBANESE ARMY WOULD BE ABLE TO PUT THESE FORCES IN PLACE WITHIN TWO WEEKS AFTER FINAL POLITICAL AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED AND STRESSED THAT LEBANESE ARMY UNITS WOULD BE 100 PERCENT, TOTALLY LEBANESE AND THAT SOME WILL COME FROM VERY MARONITE AREAS.

5. PALESTINIANS WILL BE ALLOWED TO RETAIN AN ARMED PRESENCE IN ONLY TWO PARTS OF SOUTHERN LEBANON -- THE ARQUB AND A "MIDDLE SECTOR" NEAR BINT JBAYL. THE JUMBER OF ARMED PALESTINIANS IN THE ARQUB IS STILL UNDER DISCUSSION, BOUTROS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BEIRUT 04204 261711Z

SAID, BUT GENERAL KHOURY, READING FROM HIS NOTES, SAID THEY COULD BE PERMITTED ONLY EIGHT 120MM MORTARS AND TWELVE SAM-7 ROCKETS AS HEAVY WEAPONS. IN THE MIDDLE SECTOR, A TOTAL OF 250 ARMED PALESTINIANS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO REMAIN, AS PROVIDED IN THE CAIRO AGREEMENT, AT FIVE DIFFERENT POSTS. THESE MEN WOULD BE PERMITTED A TOTAL OF THREE 120MM MORTARS, SIX 80MM MORTARS AND NINE 60MM MORTARS. NONE OF THESE POSTS WOULD BE CLOSER TO ISRAEL THAN TEN KILOMETERS FROM THE BORDER.

6. BOUTROS SAID THAT ONCE LEBANESE ARMY UNITS HAD ENTERED THE SOUTH, MAJOR HADDAD AND THE OTHER OFFICERS NOW COMMANDING CHRISTIAN FORCES IN THE SOUTH WOULD BE REPLACED BUT NOT REPEAT NOT COURT-MARTIALED. HE ANTICIPATED THAT GENERAL KHOURY COULD GRADUALLY REASSERT HIS CONTROL OVER TROOPS IN THE AREA. AS FOR LEBANESE ARAB ARMY UNITS IN TYRE, THEY WILL BE MOVED AND PLACED UNDER THE COMMAND OF NEW OFFICERS. THEIR PRESENT OFFICERS WILL ALSO BE TRANSFERRED BUT NOT ARRESTED.

7. BOUTROS ASKED THAT WE INFORM WASHINGTON

IMMEDIATELY OF THE PRESENT STATE OF NEGOTIATIONS AND REQUEST THE DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS IN AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE. HE ALSO ASKED THAT WE SOUND OUT THE ISRAELIS, STRESSING THAT HE NEEDED THEIR PRELIMINARY REACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, IN ORDER TO SAVE TIME. HE EMPHASIZED HIS BELIEF THAT THE PARTIES ARE CLOSE TO AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE BUT EMPHASIZED THAT NOTHING IS DEFINITE YET AND THERE MAY STILL BE OBSTACLES.

8. BOUTROS SAID HE CONSIDERS THIS APPROACH A TEST OF ISRAELI ATTITUDE. IF ISRAEL SAYS "NO" IT MEANS (1) THE USG IS WILLING TO PUT PRESSURE ON ISRAEL TO AGREE TO A REASONABLE PROPOSAL, AND (2) ISRAEL IS SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 BEIRUT 04204 261711Z

WILLING TO RISK A CONFRONTATION.

9. COMMENT: (A) PRESENTATION WAS MORE UPBEAT THAN WE EXPECTED. IF SYRIANS HAVE REALLY AGREED TO TAKE IN ALL THE PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS WHO HAVE COME HERE SINCE 1969, THAT IS A MAJOR CONCESSION, AND IF PALESTINIANS ARE REALLY PREPARED TO RETURN TO CAMPS (WITH EXCEPTIONS NOTED) THAT IS MILESTONE. DO NOT BELIEVE BOUTROS WOULD HAVE SPOKEN IN THESE TERMS, HOWEVER, UNLESS HE REASONABLY SURE AGREEMENT ALONG THESE LINES IN THE OFFING. WHEN WE ASKED HOW CLOSE THEY WERE TO AGREEMENT, HE SAID MAYBE FIVE OR SIX DAYS. WHEN WE ASKED WHETHER PLO WAS SERIOUS ABOUT REACHING AGREEMENT, HE SAID THEY SPOKE AS THOUGH THEY WERE, BUT ONE COULD NEVER TELL. GENERAL KHOURY SAID PALESTINIANS WERE "BEGGING" FOR AGREEMENT. WHEN WE ASKED ABOUT REJECTION FRONT, THEY REPLIED PLO-FATAH SAID TO LEAVE REFUSAL FRONT TO THEM. THAT IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE. (B) LEBANESE HAVE NOW COME FORWARD WITH DETAILED PROPOSAL REQUESTED BY ISRAEL. ALTHOUGH BOUTROS EMPHASIZED THAT THESE DETAILS NOT FINAL OR DEFINITE, THEY OBVIOUSLY FURTHER ALONG THEN THEY HAVE BEEN BEFORE. THEIR INSISTENCE THAT DETAILS NOT FIRM MAY ARISE FROM DESIRE TO AVOID BEING REBUFFED. (C) AS BOUTROS SAID, ISRAELI REACTION WILL BE IMPORTANT INDICATION OF ISRAELI INTENTIONS AND OF OUR WILLINGNESS TO USE OUR INFLUENCE. LEBANESE FEEL THEY PUTTING FORTH REASONABLE OFFER- IF ISRAEL TURNS IT DOWN IT WILL MEAN TO THEM THAT ISRAEL NOT INTERESTED IN PEACE IN THE SOUTH, AND THAT USG UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO BRING ISRAEL AROUND. (D) NEVERTHELESS, BOUTROS, WANTS US TO BE INDIRECT IN RAISING THIS WITH ISRAELIS. HE APPARENTLY DOES NOT WANT TO BE IN SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 05 BEIRUT 04204 261711Z

POSITION OF REQUIRING ISRAELI APPROVAL FOR ACTIONS
BY GOL. HE WANTS TO KNOW, NOWEVER, WHETHER ISRAELIS
WILL GO ALONG. AMBASSADOR LEWIS WILL HAVE TO BE TACT-
FUL IN PUTTING QUESTIONS TO ISRAELIS, BUT WE SEE NO
ESCAPE FROM DIRECT APPROACH IF WE WANT DIRECT ANSWER.
PARKER

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